

# DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

November, 2020



## President's Message

I'm tired of all this COVID mess and I know you are too. How about a little garden levity this month?

You know you're a gardener when....

- You want garden tools for significant gift giving occasions. My birthday was last week and my favorite gift was a new Hori Hori knife. I wore the last one out as it is one of my favorite tools. Very versatile. Did you know hori means 'to dig'?
- You spend more time cleaning garden beds than your house, especially this year. That has truly been a blessing this year!
- Your car automatically gets off I-65 at exit 219 whether you're going north or south!
- Everyone at Petals from the Past knows you and what you want when you drive in the lot.
- You clean out one of your garden sheds and have to divest yourself from a mountain of plastic pots in all sizes. I'm still having nightmares!!! (I had to hide some so my husband wouldn't see!)
- You have to resist pulling weeds wherever you go. Some people don't like for you to pull their weeds. Go figure!
- You don't take a vacation during the peak growing season unless there are multiple gardens on the itinerary.
- You use Latin names in public and people tell you to hush your mouth.
- You try to save every puny little plant that you know should go in the compost pile.
- You can never say no to another plant. You'll find a place for it... somewhere.
- You can never say no to another book. Especially if it is garden-related. My book collection is taking over the world!
- You clean out your purse and there are numerous unidentified seeds in the bottom from collecting while you were visiting someone else's garden. Now I'll just have to plant them to find out what they are!
- You greet all your plants when they come back in the spring like they are long lost friends because they are!
- Even your best t-shirt has dirt stains on it.
- All of your friends automatically know that you're in the back yard – gardening of course!!



Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

Keep in touch. Always remember, time began in a garden

*Debbie*





"Mary, Mary, Quite contrary, How does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells and little maids all in a row." The secret to Mary's garden success is quite peculiar in nature: "With silver bells and cockleshells and pretty maids all in a row." Most of us lack the silver bells or cockle shells or pretty maids, but we do have other interesting, colorful and sometimes spectacular plants in our gardens that should be shared with our MG family. Ms. Jane McCarthy suggested that everyone share pictures of their gardens along with the scientific name for each plant. What a great challenge! This standing article will appear every month in the Dirty Digs. **Send your pix and story for the December publication.**

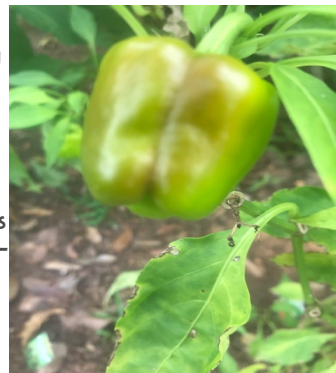
As mentioned in last month's article, Tim McCoy tried tomatoes this year and they produced bountifully. Problem was, he didn't know how to turn them off! One of the uses for these tomatoes, besides the obvious spaghetti sauce, was to can salsa. Our family loves smok'n hot salsa and our first batch which should have "wowed" them merely elicited meek responses of, "Well the spicing is good, it is very tasty." Message: not hot enough. So we turned up the heat and had great hot salsa. The family is happy! Below are pictures of our pepper garden.



This is our pepper garden, holding all our hopes for a great tasting and hot salsa. Pictured on left is Tim McCoy working the pepper garden. Planted were jalapenos, serranos, habaneros, red ghost, Anaheim, cayenne, Cajun belle and bell pepper



To the right is a cayenne pepper. I was in the habit of taking a small bite of the peppers to determine heat. This pepper was hot! The *cayenne pepper* is a type of *Capsicum annuum*. It is usually a moderately hot chili *pepper* used to flavor dishes and is used in cooking spicy dishes either as a powder or in its whole form. It is also used as a herbal supplement.



We planted 3 bell pepper plants since we love them sautéed with just about anything. We planted green although there are yellow, orange, or red varieties of capsicum which have a mild or sweet flavor and are often eaten raw.



Pictured left to right an Anaheim, , a mild pepper that grows 6-10", a red ghost pepper is an inter-specific hybrid cultivated in the Indian states, and the habanero pepper is a hot variety which are green and color as they mature. The most common color variants are orange and red and a ripe habanero is typically 2-6 inches long.

**This will be a monthly article to make certain your garden pictures are included. Share with your MG friends.**





# Tour On The Calera Rail Road

By: Glenn Huovinen

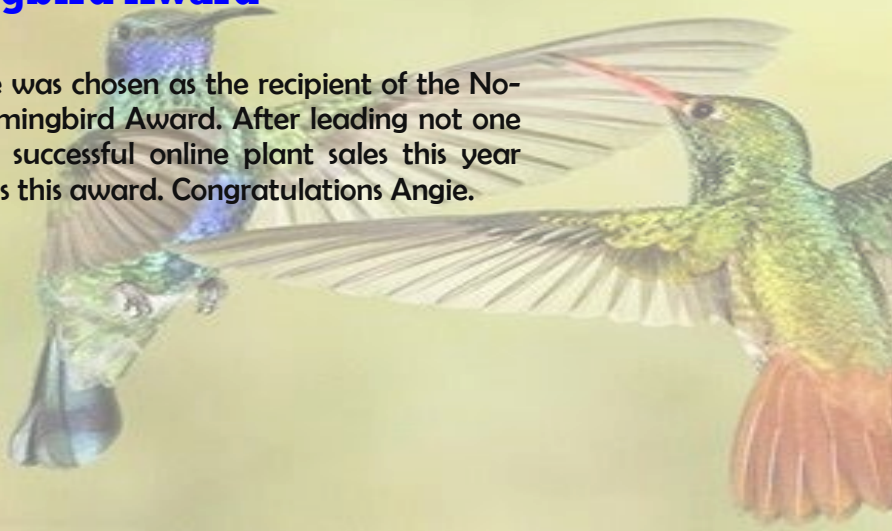
On November 7, a group of our members traveled to Calera, Alabama to take the Fall Foliage Tour on the historic cars of the Calera Rail Road. The weather was great and all had a good time as the train traveled up and down the tracks.





## Hummingbird Award

Angie Trimble was chosen as the recipient of the November Hummingbird Award. After leading not one but two very successful online plant sales this year Angie deserves this award. Congratulations Angie.



# **BREAKING** **LIVE** **NEWS**



## ***ANNOUNCING THE ELECTION OF THE NEW OFFICERS FOR 2021***

President - Debbie Boutelier

Vice President - Bionca Lindsey

Secretary - Lanell Tatum

Treasurer - Cheri Cook





# Step Inside the Garden Gate

By: Debbie Boutelier

I love gardening for many reasons, but one that is at the top of the list is that gardens are alive! There are so many levels of life in a garden from the microscopic critters in the soil to the larger animals that live above the ground. Most of the time, the garden is so peaceful, and I love listening to the sounds of the critters as they move through the garden. Providing habitat for our pollinators and other wildlife is so important. As Doug Tallamy says in his book, *Nature's Best Hope*, we need to look at our yards as if they were a national park, providing habitat for the wild creatures. Only then, can we save the planet. I have included some of my favorite images from this year in the garden. If you look closely, you will see pollinators and other garden critters who call my garden home in just about all the images.

L-R A Japanese beetle on *Lantana camara*; a very vocal tree frog; & *Rosa* sp. 'Dorothy Perkins'



L – R: Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) is a nectar plant for many native pollinators; an Eastern Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio glaucus*) enjoying a muddle to extract minerals; an anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) perched on a chicory (*Cichorium intybus* 'Garnet') stem looking for lunch

A planting of Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) attracts many pollinators.



L – R: The bright blue flowers of chicory (*Cichorium intybus* 'Garnet') attract a plethora of pollinators; An Eastern swallowtail enjoying the nectar of *Lantana camara*

The domesticated critters of my garden: a pair of Khaki Campbell drakes, young hens enjoying the shade of the gazebo, and the kitty guardians always on patrol





# PLANT PROPAGATION BY DIVISION

By: **Don Armstrong with edits by Glenda Armstrong & Debbie Boutelier**

It was 90 degrees outside in 2015 when I wrote this article on plant propagation. Propagation by division should be done in October, November, and December, when the plant is dormant and the weather is cooler. The plants used for examples and photos in this article are from Petals From the Past and were, obviously, potted, not dug up from the garden. This article was written in early September to share an idea with the readers so you can get more plants ready for the Spring Plant Sale, hence the use of potted plants for examples.



## The Victims

Many perennials will have dead or dying centers after they have been in the ground a few years – some as soon as only three years. Perennials need to be divided. This results in plants to share with other gardeners and to have ready for the Spring Plant Sale. When you dig up a perennial it is a good time to look at rearranging the garden layout. It is often better to not put the perennial back in the same place in the garden. Remember to refresh the garden soil where you dig up the perennial as the perennial will have depleted some of the soil nutrients.

Division is done on plants that do not have a single stem or crown. Hostas, Mums, Ornamental Grasses, and many of the perennial flowers can easily be divided by this method. See the side bar list provided by Chip East, Regional Extension Agent, for a more complete list of plants to divide by crown division.

Division is very easy. The “hard” part is getting the plant out of the ground – that is digging work! So, get the shovel out and dig up some old perennials. Some folks use their shovel to divide their plants – I find this does not allow accuracy in placing the cutting edge in the correct place between the stems. I have seen my Father-in-Law use an ax to divide stubborn plants! (I have used it too.) The two key tools I use are shown in this photo:



## The Tools

Put your plant on your favorite working surface and divide it. If it is a clumping plant, like the grasses, then use the machete and chop! First, take a look at the plant and see if you can pull the grasses apart and

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get between the individual grass stems with your fingers. Then just slice, push, hack, or whatever technique you like to split the plant. With grasses you can often get four or more pieces from one clump. If you were at the propagation class I did last Spring, then you saw me use my hands to pull apart Mondo Grass. I find that Monkey Grass and Mondo Grass are easy to pull apart by hand (depends upon the soil too!).



**Grass division with machete – split**



**Grass division with machete – quartered**

Some plants are better when divided by hand. Plants with rhizomes (Lily of the Nile, Rattlesnake Plant, Canna, Giant Rhubarb, Ginger, Iris, and Red Hot Poker) and corms (Crocus, Gladiolus, and Freesia) are good examples of this. All loosely growing clumps are best done by hand. Tugging and pulling are two great stress relievers and should be used whenever possible. So, get your hands in there and have fun. I don't wear gloves as I like to feel what I am pulling upon.



**Grip the Plant**



**Pull Apart**

See how easy the propagation by division was to do. You just cut or pull and you have a new plant ready to pot up! Now it is time to get them into pots and have them ready for the Spring Plant Sale. Normally, I use gallon pots for the divisions. I put wood chips in the bottom of the pot (sometimes the pot is half full of wood chips), slide the division into the pot, and add my potting soil. I label the plants and fertilize them too. I use Osmocote, a slow release fertilizer.

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**Slide Cutting into the Pot**

The grass cuttings will need a haircut. Other cuttings will need to be trimmed up to finish the project.



**Add the Potting Soil**



**Potted, But Not Finished**

At the end of an hour of work you can have a lot of plants ready for the Spring Plant Sale!



**A Haircut for the Grasses**



**Finished Pots – Ready for Water and the TLC Area**

As the weather cools and your perennials go dormant, dig them up, divide them, and have some plants ready for the Spring Plant Sale. Share one or two with a fellow Master Gardener, too.

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## SIDE BAR

### Some Herbaceous Plants That Can Be Propagated By Division

Dr. Chip East, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Regional Extension Agent  
Commercial Horticulture

*Ascanthus spinosus* (Spiny Bear's Breeches)

*Achillea filipendulina* (Fernleaf Yarrow)

*Achillea millefolium* (Common Yarrow)

*Allium schoemoprasum* (Chives)

*Anthemis tinctoria* (Golden Marguerite)

*Aquilegia* x hybrid (Hybrid Columbine)

*Artemisia ludoviciana* (White Sage)

*Astilbe* sp. (False Spirea)

*Bellis perennis* (English Daisy)

*Bergenia cordifolia* (Heartleaf Bergenia)

*Campanula glomerata* (Clustered Bellflower)

*Canna* x *generalis* (Canna)

*Chasmanthium latifolium* (Northern Sea Oats)

*Chrysanthemum* sp.

*Coreopsis lanceolate* (Coreopsis)

*Cyclamen persicum* (Cyclamen)

*Delphinium* x *elatum* (Delphinium)

*Dianthus barbatus* (Sweet William)

*Dianthus plumarius* (Cottage Pink)

*Digitalis purpurea* (Common Foxglove)

*Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Coneflower)

*Equisetum hyemale* (Horsetail)

*Erysimum* sp. (Blister-Cress)

*Festuca ovina* (Blue Fescue)

*Gaillardia* x *grandiflora* (Blanket Flower)

*Gazania rigens* (Treasure Flower)

*Gerbera jamesonii* (Transvaal Daisy)

*Gladiolus* x *hortulanus* (Gladiolus)

*Helleborus orientalis* (Lenten Rose)

*Hemerocallis* hybrids (Daylily)

*Hippeastrum* hybrids (Amaryllis)

*Hosta* sp. (Plantain Lily)

*Hyacinthus orientalis* (Hyacinth)

*Iberis sempervirens* (Evergreen Candytuft)

*Iris* hybrids (Tall Bearded Iris)

*Kniphofia uvaria* (Red-Hot Poker)

*Narcissus* hybrids (Daffodil)

*Origanum vulgare* (Oregano)

*Stachys byzantina* (Lamb's Ear)

*Zantedeschia* sp. (Calla Lily)



# Grow Your Own Wildflowers

By: Mary Leigh Oliver



AUBURN UNIVERSITY, Ala.—Fields of blooming wildflowers bring to mind thoughts of springtime and sunshine; however, the process of growing wildflowers begins now. In order to create a flowing backyard meadow, fall is the time to begin the planting process.

According to Alabama Extension home grounds agent Dani Carroll, the wilderness of the backyard can best preserve local flowers while encouraging wildlife to visit the garden.

“For less lawn mowing maintenance and more wildlife watching, growing a backyard meadow is the perfect deal,” Carroll said.

Not to mention, they’re a beautiful addition to any backyard space.

## **Purchasing Seeds**

The first important step when purchasing wildflower seed is to survey the planting area conditions. Choosing seeds that will grow best in specific conditions is essential. Gardeners can ask a wildflower seed supplier which mixes would be best for specific areas and soil types. For assistance from a supplier, gardeners can consult Xerces—a resource for seed supplier information in the Southeast. Learn more about Xerces.

In addition to choosing seeds that will thrive best in a given area, try picking a varied seed mix.

“Try to choose a mix with annuals, perennials and grasses for different bloom times, shapes and more diversity,” Carroll said.

Planting a medley of wildflower varieties will provide a more natural, wild meadow-like atmosphere.

## **Growing Your Meadow**

After selecting seed, it is time to prepare the garden.

“One of the biggest challenges of starting a wildflower meadow is area preparation,” Carroll said. “It is crucial to remove existing vegetation from the soil.”

There are several options to remove surface vegetation: manual removal, sterilization with clear plastic and even composting on top of the soil. In addition, if a proper herbicide is chosen, Carroll said that may also be a good removal solution.

After removing all existing vegetation, it is time to begin sowing seeds. Carroll said fall temperatures below 60 degrees Fahrenheit are ideal for sowing the wildflower seeds. This allows perennials to become established for an early spring bloom.

To plant the seed, rake the area lightly to create

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a proficient seed to soil contact. Also, try mixing the seeds with damp sand or a similar source to help spread the seeds evenly over large areas.

Finally, to prevent the seeds from washing away, cover them with a layer of light straw.

### **Benefits of a Wildflower Meadow**

In addition to natural beauty, there are many other benefits to planting a wildflower meadow.

Carroll offers the following added benefits:

Borders of wildflowers near vegetable gardens are ideal for attracting pollinators like butterflies, honeybees and hummingbirds.

Native perennials and reseeding annuals enhance gardens with blooms, as well as having few pest and disease problems.

Wildflower perennials will brighten a flower border with striking beauty.

Planting colorful varieties of flowers in wooden barrels and clay pots near seating areas creates a pleasing conversation spot.

Easily maintained wildflowers can instantly make roadsides more welcoming.

Whether you are looking to spice up the garden or brighten a dull area, wildflowers are the perfect flowers to start sowing this fall.



## *Thanksgiving*

We walk on starry fields of white  
And do not see the daisies,  
For blessings common in our sight  
We rarely offer praises.  
We sigh for some supreme delight  
To crown our lives with splendour,  
And quite ignore our daily store  
Of pleasures sweet and tender.

Our cares are bold and push their way  
Upon our thought and feeling;  
They hang about us all the day,  
Our time from pleasure stealing.  
So unobtrusive many a joy  
We pass by and forget it,  
But worry strives to own our lives,  
And conquers if we let it.

There's not a day in all the year  
But holds some hidden pleasure,  
And, looking back, joys oft appear  
To brim the past's wide measure.  
But blessings are like friends, I hold,  
Who love and labour near us.  
We ought to raise our notes of praise  
While living hearts can hear us.

Full many a blessing wears the guise  
Of worry or of trouble;  
Far-seeing is the soul, and wise,  
Who knows the mask is double.  
But he who has the faith and strength  
To thank his God for sorrow  
Has found a joy without alloy  
To gladden every morrow.

We ought to make the moments notes  
Of happy, glad Thanksgiving;  
The hours and days a silent phrase  
Of music we are living.  
And so the theme should swell and grow  
As weeks and months pass o'er us,  
And rise sublime at this good time,  
A grand Thanksgiving chorus.

-Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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## RECIPE IDEA

*From Virginias on King*

### Ingredients:

#### **For the chicken**

1 whole chicken  
1 bag of carrots  
2 yellow onions  
1 head celery  
3 bay leaves  
10 peppercorns  
3 sprigs thyme  
1 bunch tarragon  
1/4 stick butter  
Salt and pepper, to taste



#### **For the dumplings:**

2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1 ounce cold shortening  
4 ounces butter milk  
1 cup all-purpose flour



### Directions:

#### **For the chicken**

Place the chicken in a pot and cover it with water and half of all the vegetables. Add all of the herbs except for the tarragon into the pot. Bring the mixture to a boil and then reduce it to a simmer. Boil the chicken until it is done and falling off the bone. Slice the remaining vegetables that were not originally placed in the pot.

#### **For the dumplings**

Combine all of the ingredients until they form a paste. Roll the paste out on a floured board and cut it into 1 inch squares.

#### **Then**

When the chicken is done pull it out of the water and separate the meat from the skin and bone. Strain the liquid from the pot the chicken was in and reduce the liquid by half.

Add the tarragon, the sliced vegetables, and the dumplings to this liquid. Cook this mixture until the dumplings and vegetables are almost done then add the 1/4 stick of butter.

Cook this mixture until it becomes creamy. Season it to taste.



Our Jo Felio receiving her length of service pin at the November meeting. Can you believe 20 years of being a Master Gardener?





## Monthly Meetings

Second Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church, Prattville (unless otherwise notified)

- ⇒ All odd-numbered months: January, March, May, July, September, November will have 6:00 p.m. meetings.
- ⇒ Most even-numbered months: February, April, June, August, October will have 9:00 a.m. meeting.



## Things to do.....

Start mulching strawberries, blackberries, and grapes.  
Plant shrubs, trees, and vines.  
Time to overseed lawns for a green lawn this winter.  
Use proper herbicide to kill germinating winter weeds.  
Get rose planting underway.  
Plant hardy annuals such as larkspur, poppies, pansies, anchusa, and candytuft.  
Continue spring bulb planting.  
Get the most important soil tests done for the lawn and planting beds.



**Autauga County Master Gardeners  
Assoc.  
c/o Autauga County Extension Office  
2226 Highway 14 West  
Autaugaville, AL 36003**

PLACE  
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HERE

To: